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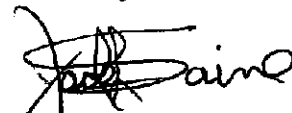
August 12, 2008

Case Number 07-829-GA-AIR

To Whom It May Concern:

The attached editorial in its entirety that appeared in a recent edition of The Lima News expresses my feelings about Dominion's rate increase. I would urge PUCO committee members to vote NO.

Sincerely,



Jack L. Saine
2280 Oakland Parkway
Lima, Ohio 45805
(419) 221-1044

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EDITORIAL

Reject rate hike

Utilities commission should say no to Dominion request, and rethink punishing idea from agency staff

Imagine having only one choice from which to buy gasoline for your car. No matter the price of gasoline at this particular station, it would be your only option. When prices were highest, you might cut back on usage in order to save money.

So, what if the state regulatory body that oversaw your one choice in the station decided you should pay a higher price just for the privilege of having said gas station available when you needed it, however often or however rarely?

It would be a bad policy proposal for gas stations. It's no less horrible as it applies to the flat-rate customer service fee Dominion East Ohio charges. But that is exactly what the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio staff proposes you do — pay more just for service, no matter how much or how little you use your natural gas service.

Residents and advocates of people on fixed and low income spoke out Tuesday against the proposed rate hikes. The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel opposes this and another rate increase, calling both unreasonable. The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio should reject the increases, and consumers who didn't get the chance to attend Tuesday's public hearing should write PUCO to oppose the rate increases.

In August 2007, Dominion East Ohio filed with the utilities commission last August to increase rates by \$76 million per year, the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel reported. This would be mean a 26.6 percent increase in distribution portion of bills for customers in the company's west region, which includes in Lima.

Someone at the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio apparently didn't think that was enough. The commission instead recommended an increase in the base distribution charge — from \$4.98 per month here up, and from \$6.70 a month in the company's east regions up to \$17.50 each month.

The charge covers services such as meter reading, billing and maintenance, according to the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel. This part of the bill, which has a varying component based on usage, is about 28 percent of your monthly bill. The actual cost of gas is not part of this charge. The point is that, for now anyway, use less gas you use, the lower your rate.

Elementary school pupils understand the concept of conservation. The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio surely ought to be able to grasp it. But no. The agency seems to believe those who use less gas should help pay for the services of those who use more.

Dominion had requested setting its base distribution charge for all its customers at \$5.70 per month, which still would be an increase for customers here, but it would give the company's entire service area the same basic charge.

Dominion did seek approval to start a 25-year pipeline infrastructure plan, which the company says would cost \$2.6 billion. Customers would pay an additional \$1.12 the first year, again according to the company filing, with the fee going up as much as 90 cents each following year. Dominion also asked for permission to begin a \$126.3 million plan to retrofit automated meter reading devices on all 1.3 million gas meters in its territory.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel says Dominion is asking for an unreasonable profit level. Normally, such talk is bothersome. Customers in a free market will determine how much profit they're willing to let a company make. Utilities are not a free market, however. State regulation is the price of having a state-provided monopoly on a service.

Further, the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel says customers shouldn't have to pay for differing accounting methods for retiree pensions and employee benefits, or for things such as lobby expenses.

Those who don't want to do so should let the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio know.

STATE YOUR CASE

WRITE PUCO: Consumers can write letters to the PUCO about the proposed Dominion East Ohio rate increase. All letters and envelopes should reference Case Number 07-829-GA-A/R. Letters should be sent to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, Attention: Docketing Division, 180 E. Broad St., Columbus, OH 43215.